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First U.S. Army's BCST BrigadesMore than computer simulations

*By Capt. Vince Mitchell
First U.S. Army Public Affairs Office*

During two recently completed simulation exercises (SIMEX) hosted by



Sgt. First Class Karen Grant, Chief Observer Controller/Trainer for the 344th Combat Support Hospital's simulation exercise and member of the 1st Brigade (BCST), 78th Division (TS), briefs her staff during the 344th CSH's simulation exercise. Grant, an Army medic and trainer ensures the exercise is well-planned and executed. (photo by Capt. Vince Mitchell)

two of First Army's three Battle Command Staff Training (BCST) Brigades it was obvious the training provided involved much more than just computer simulations. However, many outside of these organizations still believe the training offered only involves soldiers huddled around terminals playing computer "games."

"By calling a BCST Brigade a simulation brigade you're limiting the focus of what we do to that simulation, computer-driven exercise," said 1st Brigade (BCST), 78th Division (Training Support) Command Sgt. Maj. Tom Holland. "We have the capability of doing much more than that."

The BCST brigade is charged with providing doctrinally sound staff training based on training objectives identified by the unit commander in order to enhance individual and unit readiness to meet directed mobilization and/or war-time requirements. The brigades are each comprised of three separate units: the 1st Simulation Exercise Group (SEG), the 2nd SEG, and the Battle Projection Group (BPG). The SEG focus is on conducting training on Tactical Operations Center (TOC) operations and Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). The BPG provides the complex technical support, communications, opposing force and scenario development for exercises.

Holland explained that his brigade teaches staffs how to do MDMP, and help refine TOC operations including how to develop good tactical Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). He went on to say that his unit has added a Junior Battle Staff Course that focuses on graphics and map reading for junior enlisted soldiers working in a TOC. Holland further explained that though the current simulation models (software) such as the Combat Service Support Training Simulation System (CSSTSS), Corps Battle Simulation (CBS), Battalion and Brigade Simulations (BBS), and the Spectrum systems are important during a SIMEX they should be mostly transparent. He said commanders and their staff going through the process of making decisions is really what's key.

See BCST Brigades, p, 11

Commander's Corner

First Army Soldiers, Civilians and Families

The holiday season reminds us of the promise of peace and hope for the future as American Soldiers stand guard for freedom throughout the world. These superb men and women are true patriots honoring us on a daily basis with their steadfast service and loyalty.

Please keep these great Americans in your thoughts and prayers, and remember the lonely vigil their families endure as they await the return of their loved ones. Be there, when possible, to welcome Soldiers home in your areas; they deserve our support, as do their families.

Our training support divisions and brigades are the tip of our First Army spear as we mobilize and train thousands of National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers. Training support Soldiers are key members of our team for they mentor and guide units and troops to success both at home station and mobilization station. All of you are doing a superb job. Thank you.

We will be working very hard in the next few months, and I am fully confident that the professionalism and esprit I am seeing everywhere will ensure that each deploying soldier is properly equipped, trained and ready for OIF 2 and OEF 5. At the same time, we will be preparing for the demobilization of Reserve Component forces from OIF 1.

During this joyous season, take time out for your families and loved ones. Stay alert and keep safe, as you look after our most precious First Army resources our people. Thank you for all your hard work and service.

Best wishes to all and may God bless America.

Lt. Gen. Joseph R. Inge
Commander, First U.S. Army
First In Deed



Scout platoon soldiers from the 1-252 AR are firing the M240B for night qualification during their post mobilization training at Ft. Bragg. First Army has mobilized more than 4,000 soldiers in the 30th Heavy Separate Brigade. (U.S. Army photo)

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Conditional promotion policy clarified

By Spc. Bill Putnam
Army News Service

The Army News Service article posted on Nov. 25 on the conditional promotion policy being rescinded prompted a lot of questions from Soldiers in the field.

“Can a specialist be conditionally be promoted to sergeant with the new changes coming up?” asked Spc. Mitchell Bosch, a Soldier in the Hawaii-based 65th Engineer Battalion, via an e-mail to Army News Service. Other Soldiers around the Army have emailed or called Army News Service asking the same question.

They can be promoted, said Sgt. Maj. Julian Edmondson, the personnel policy integrator at the Pentagon's G-1 staff. Under a new policy dated Oct. 10, the Army will stop all conditional promotions from sergeant to sergeant first class after Jan. 1.

Here's how the new policy will look:

A sergeant has to graduate from the Primary Leadership Development Course to be considered for promotion to staff sergeant. A staff sergeant has to graduate from the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course to be considered for promotion to sergeant first class.

A sergeant first class had to graduate from the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course to be considered for promotion to master sergeant.

The only exception to the new policy was conditional promotion from specialist or corporal to sergeant. They don't need to attend PLDC to be promoted, Edmondson said. In fact, the requirement for a specialist or corporal to complete Primary Leadership Development Course within one year of promotion has been waived too, Edmondson said.

“Now there is no (noncommissioned officer education system) requirement for PLDC,” Edmondson said. Under the old policy, a Soldier promoted to sergeant had to finish PLDC within one year to keep the rank. That's changed, Edmondson said. A Soldier promoted to sergeant doesn't need PLDC at all to keep the rank but will need it for consideration for staff sergeant, he said.

Command Sergeant Major's Message



**Command Sgt. Maj.
Jeffrey J. Mellinger**

In November 2003, I happened to be in the Washington, D.C. area for a few days. Seeing an opportunity to visit some of our wounded soldiers at Walter Reed, I (along with three other CSMs) paid a visit to the medical center. We spent a couple hours visiting soldiers, family members and therapists. Since there were so many soldiers and so little time, we decided to split our

party into two teams, and we set off in opposite directions in search of wounded and recovering soldiers.

Now, as a general rule, hospital visits are not very inspiring or motivating for most people. In fact, my own personal experiences with hospitals have left me with quite the opposite opinion. But I have to tell you, I left Walter Reed on the 5th of November feeling uplifted and reenergized. For you see, I had the opportunity to visit with some current-day men of honor - the wounded and recovering soldiers from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

We visited wounded soldiers with names like Busby, Ford, Armstrong, Gray and VanDykes -- each with their own story, each with their own recovery challenges, each with their own set of concerns. But one thing was consistent. Each soldier we visited was upbeat, positive, and thankful and proud to be a soldier.

But none struck me quite so hard or so profoundly as when I found myself on Ward 57, near Room 5735. The occupant of 5735 was in the nearby computer room, we were told. It was there that we found Sergeant Alex Leonard, 101st Airborne (Air Assault) DIVARTY. At first glance, we saw a soldier missing half of his right leg, and with pretty serious wounds to his left leg and arm. How can one be upbeat and positive when looking at a soldier so torn and wounded? And how can you be upbeat without being perceived as glib or irreverent? And what do you say?

My first inclination was to feel something for this young warrior - sorrow, sympathy, a sense of loss for what was and what could be. But Sergeant Leonard was having none of my thinking. Cheerful, bright, and animated, Sergeant Leonard immediately struck me as

a man who noted that his right leg was amputated above the knee, but had already reconciled himself to life and living, and would have no part in feeling sorry for himself, so why should we? And just as strong as he, SGT Leonard's mother gave a knowing smile and excused herself as we entered the room, as if she knew we all needed some time together to speak on soldierly things.

So what happened, we asked? And how are you doing, we asked? Sergeant Leonard explained how the explosion had thrown him clear of his vehicle, but that the real hero of the moment was the medic, Sergeant Bradley. Sergeant Bradley, Leonard explained, had only been assigned to the unit the day before, and nobody really knew him. But it was SGT Bradley who placed himself between the wounded Leonard and the enemy fire coming from the flank of the convoy. And Sergeant Leonard was fairly upset at whatever award Sergeant Bradley had received, for he thought it had not been enough.

But as for Sergeant Leonard, while his future will certainly hold some challenges, positive thinking will probably not be in the list. When I asked him if there was anything I could do to help, all he wanted to know was would the Army let him serve until his ETS date? He didn't want to be put out of the Army on a medical board. He wanted to serve to the last day of his enlistment. And surely, he asked, there is something I can do for the Army? Wow! Now, what can you say to a soldier like that? I assured him I would relay his request to his division command sergeant major and division commander (which I later did).

After we left Walter Reed, the four of us rode for a few minutes in silence, overpowered by the resolve and strength exhibited by our soldiers. After a few minutes of driving, we began to speak of the soldiers we had seen and visited. As each of us recounted our time that day, one thing became clear -- we were all even prouder than before that we are fortunate to serve with soldiers such as these -- these men of honor.

112,000 service members tapped for Iraq

Story and photo by Spec. Bill Putnam
Army News Service

About 112,000 service members – including more than 37,000 National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers – should be headed to Iraq and Kuwait early next year to replace forces already on the ground, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced.



"Sgt 1st Class Michael Benson gives tactic, techniques and procedures to quickly lay in the mortar"

In addition, more than 3,700 reserve-component Soldiers should be headed to Afghanistan by then as well, he said at the first of two

Pentagon news conferences Thursday about Iraq and Afghanistan deployments. The bulk of troops have already received their alert orders, Rumsfeld said, but additional alerts can be expected in the near future.

Rotations in and out of Iraq will start in January and be completed by April, Rumsfeld said. The rotation plan, first announced in July by then-acting Army Chief of Staff Gen. Jack Keane, is still grounded in the Central Command requirements for security in Iraq, Joint Chief of Staff Gen. Richard B. Myers said at the news conference.

The goal for this next deployment of U.S. forces is to reduce the overall footprint in Iraq, Rumsfeld said. The plan as it stands now is to decrease U.S. divisions in Iraq from four to three and 17 combat brigades to 13, he said. More units – like mobile infantry and military police – that are appropriate to deal with the current situation will be brought in, Rumsfeld said. "But it's important to note that numbers do not necessarily equate with capabilities," Rumsfeld said. "This much is certain: the overall capability of the security forces in Iraq will increase." Active-duty troops headed in are 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas; 1st Infantry Division from Germany; 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; and elements of the U.S. Marine Corps' 1st Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Pendleton, Calif.

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The 1st Cavalry will replace 1st Armored Division, currently in and around Baghdad. The 1st Infantry will replace the 101st Airborne and the 4th Infantry Division. The 1st Marine Expeditionary and an Army brigade will replace 82nd Airborne Division in western Iraq. Two multinational divisions, led by the British and the Polish armies, will remain in the southeast and southern portions of Iraq, said Air Force Lt. Gen. Norton Schwartz, director for operations, J-3, Joint Staff, during the press conference.

Two National Guard combat brigades, 30th Infantry from North Carolina, and 39th Infantry of Arkansas, will augment the 1st Infantry and 1st Cavalry. A third National Guard brigade, 81st Armor Brigade from Washington state, will relieve the National Guard 53rd and 76th infantry brigades already in and around Baghdad. A majority of the units scheduled for Iraq are combat support and services, Schwartz said.

In addition, 1,000 sailors and 2,000 airmen from the Navy and Air Force will be sent to Iraq to take over specialty jobs like engineering, Schwartz said.

In Afghanistan, the 25th Infantry Division, from Schofield Barracks, will replace the Fort Drum, N. Y.-based 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) in April, Schwartz said. It was announced Thursday that when 25th Infantry arrives in Afghanistan, tours there will be one year long. Until now, tour length was six months. When 10th Mountain took over, their tour was extended to nine months, Schwartz said. The complex environment in Iraq also forced the Army to change the types of units they deployed to Iraq, said Army Lt. Gen. Richard Cody, deputy chief of staff, G3. Most units going in now will go in as motorized infantry, mainly using humvees, he said. Because of this change, the training soldiers receive at the Army's combat training centers at Hohenfels, Germany, Fort Polk, La., and Fort Irwin, Calif., will be tailored to those new missions and tactics, Cody said.

The eventual goal is to hand over the security mission to the Iraqi people, he said. Currently there are 118,000 Iraqis forming and participating in various internal security units, Rumsfeld said.

That makes them the second largest contributor to forces in Iraq behind the United States, Rumsfeld

See 112,000 service members, p.5

Partnership

The Florida National Guard, Army Signal School, and a Florida community college show that privatization and partnerships can meet soldier training needs

***Senior Airman Thomas Kielbasa
Florida National Guard Public Affairs***

A new partnership between the U.S. Army Signal School and a Florida community college is being viewed as a first step in helping Florida Army National Guard soldiers train more cost-effectively in their career fields. Commandant of the U.S. Army Signal School Brig. Gen. Janet Hicks signed an agreement with the Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) on Oct. 23, through which the civilian community college will provide technical training at their Jacksonville campus for reserve soldiers in the Signal Corps. In this pilot program, FCCJ would be accredited to train warrant officers in the Information Systems branch (251A) and enlisted soldiers as Basic Information Systems Operators/Analysts (MOS-74B).

One of the expectations of the initiative is that it will be more cost-effective to train soldiers locally in their military specialties, than send them to the Signal School at Fort Gordon. The partnered school – FCCJ – is located in Jacksonville, where the Florida National Guard's 146th Signal Battalion is headquartered.

Brig. Gen. Hicks lauded the initiative as “expanding the boundaries of military training” during the signing ceremony at Fort Gordon's Signal Corps Museum.

“It benefits the state of Florida by providing cost-effective alternative training to soldiers at local technical schools, colleges and universities,” Hicks said. “It benefits all soldiers by providing training on a flexible schedule, and we all know that flexibility is about the most precious commodity we have these days.”

Adjutant General of Florida Maj. Gen. Douglas Burnett, members of the Florida Army National Guard command staff, and representatives from FCCJ attended the ceremony in support of the agreement. “This is unique and it's the right thing to do,” Burnett said after the signing. “And it (could potentially) save taxpayers' money.” According to a prospectus, the program (where students would train locally in area colleges or technical schools) could save more than \$306,000 for every 12 students trained; the cost for training military personnel in residence at Fort Gordon is an estimated \$28,000 per student, as opposed to an estimate of less than \$2,000 per student through the program.

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One of the program initiators, Chief Warrant Officer Dwayne Jensen of the U.S. Signal School, explained the Florida initiative will act as a test program, and after a successful trial it will be pushed out to other National Guards throughout the country. He said he is considering expanding the program to include the technical sections of both the Basic and Non-Commissioned Officer Courses for signal soldiers. “The biggest challenge is getting the word out,” Jensen explained. “I've already talked to (the National Guard Bureau) and all the state (command chief warrant officers) and they're just waiting for me to get the word out and let them know how they can do it in their states.”

Jensen said the first soldier could be training in the pilot program as early as this year. According to plans, the civilian training modules will either meet or exceed the Army Training Standards for the 74B training, and allow for shortened training periods for specialty qualification.

112,000 service members (Con't)

said. That number may be surprising to some people given the short length of time in which those forces have been organized, Myers said. Before Operation Iraqi Freedom, the reserve alert and mobilization system “was broken,” Rumsfeld said. “It wasn't sufficiently respectful to the troops, their families or their employers,” he said.



Members of the 81mm mortar platoon of 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry conduct crew drills at Fort Drum.

The goal now is twofold, he said. The first is to give the longest possible notice to

them. The second is to limit Iraq tours to 18 months, with up to 12 months spent on the ground, he added. Earlier notification also will give those reserve units time to train up for their missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, Rumsfeld said. But the system hasn't been perfected, Rumsfeld said. Some units may have several months to prepare while others will have about four weeks, he said. Other units with unique missions may have to be remobilized or extended.

New Tax Relief Act Aids Service Members, Families

By K.L. Vantran
American Forces Press Service

Legislation signed by President Bush on Veterans Day increases the death gratuity payment to \$12,000 and provides that the full payment is tax-free.

That portion of the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001, to provide for service members who died in the terrorist attacks the following day and in the ongoing global war on terror, said Army Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, director, Armed Forces Tax Council. "If you are killed on active duty, regardless of whether you're in theater, or in a training accident or die from disease, your family receives \$12,000 death gratuity that is not taxed," she added. "And that's a big change. In addition any future increases to the death gratuity will remain tax free."

The death gratuity has been \$6,000 since 1991, with half of it being taxed, said the director. "It just didn't seem to be fair for the military family who was left grieving for their service member to get hit with a tax bill," she added. Capital gain exclusion for home sales is one of the most common areas people were looking for tax relief in, said Fenton. "This act will allow members to suspend the period of time which they have to sell their home and take the tax exclusion so they won't have to pay that capital gains," said Fenton. "It's retroactive to 1997 so military members who have sold their homes since 1997 have one year from Nov. 11, 2003, to request a refund for any tax they did pay."

Since 1997, when the law was previously changed, if service members who owned a home got reassigned more than 50 miles from that home or was ordered to move on post, they were no longer able to roll over the gain from that sale to the next home they purchased.

Also since 1997 individuals could exclude up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married couples) of gain from the sale of a home if they resided in the home for two of the five years preceding the sale. Under this act military and Foreign Service personnel can suspend (for up to 10 years) the time transferred away from home on official extended duty for purposes of applying the five-year portion of the two-out- of-five-year rule.

The 2003 act also includes above-the-line deduction for overnight travel expenses of military reservists and National Guardsmen who have to travel more than 100 miles to attend drills or meetings.

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"The act allows for an above-the-line, which means you don't have to itemize your taxes to take advantage of this deduction," said Fenton. She added that service members will "be able to deduct unreimbursed travel expenses such as lodging, 50 percent of meals and any transportation costs." This part of the act is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2003.

When the tax code changed in 1986, it said any military benefit existing in September 1986 would remain tax-free, said Fenton. However, it was always unclear whether military child care was included in that, she added. "This act merely makes it clear that those provisions of child care were intended to be tax-free to military members."

The tax act also provides for extra tax-filing time for troops serving in contingency operations. The internal revenue code allows service members who are serving in combat zones or hazardous duty areas to have an extension of time -- usually 180 days from the time the person leaves the combat zone -- to file taxes.

"A lot of military operations don't rise to the level of being declared by the president as 'combat,'" said Fenton. "But there are several contingency operations where service members are outside the continental United States."

The act also includes modifying eligibility criteria of tax-exempt veterans organizations; tax-free treatment of homeowners' assistance program payments; suspension of tax-exempt status for designated terrorist organizations; and extension of victims' tax relief to astronauts who die on space missions.



U.S. Army
NEWS RELEASE
Army Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20310

Soldier Radio is again this year providing a way to let you tell Service members worldwide that you care and are thinking about them during the Holidays. You can do an Audio Post Card simply by calling 1-800-330-5090.

Your recorded personalized message will be played back on www.SoldiersRadio.com. You can record a short message (30 seconds) to friends, family members or just a random message of good will. SoldiersRadio will then take your message and put it on the radio Web cast throughout the Holiday Season.

First Army “rolls up its sleeves” to make a difference

Gayle Johnson

First U. S. Army Public Affairs Office

Headquarters, First U.S. Army personnel spent Saturday, October 25- the tenth annual “Make A Difference Day”- making a difference in their local community. They rolled up their sleeves and helped to build a Habitat for Humanity home.

First Army Personnel worked on a Habitat for Humanity (HFH) project in Clayton County located on Denny Drive in College Park. It was the first HFH project for most of the First Army volunteers. All remarked that it would not be their last.



The Habitat house started with a slab and with the help of volunteers, the walls started going up.
(photo by Sgt. Maj. Tom Gittemeier)

The First Army volunteer group was lead by Sgt. Maj. Thomas Gittemeier, Senior Enlisted Adviser in First Army's Reserve Component Advisers Office.

Gittemeier has worked as a volunteer for HFH since 1993. He serves as a structural coordinator and has worked on more than 25 houses.

Mrs. Vicki Grant, Human Resource Specialist, is a first time volunteer for HFH. “The work is hard but the sense of accomplishment is great,” said Grant. “My husband and I are helping to build a home for someone in need and learning skills we can use at our own home.” Grant said she and her husband will work at the site each weekend until the home is completed.

Sgt. 1st Class LaTonya McSmith, a training NCO, is busy studying for the Sgt Audie Murphy Board, but found time to “make a difference” in her community. She is a first time HFH volunteer. “The team leaders were very

patient and took the time to show us how to do the job right.” said McSmith. “Getting it right is important not only because HFH has high standards but also this will someday be someone’s home.” McSmith will also continue to volunteer at the site as often as she can until the project is completed.

Mr. John Osborne, who works in operations as chief of the scheduling section at First Army was not a first time HFH volunteer. “It gets me out of the house and I’m helping my neighbors,” said Osborne. Osborne helped build and stand up walls at the HFH site.

Habitat for Humanity builds simple decent affordable houses in partnership with people in need. Habitat began as the idea of two men: the late Clarence Jorddan and Millard Fuller in 1942. In 1984, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn took their first Habitat work trip, the Jimmy Carter Work Project, to New York City. Their personal involvement in Habitat's ministry brought the organization national visibility and sparked interest in Habitat's work across the nation.

Through the work of Habitat, thousands of low-income families have found new hope in the form of affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity has built more than 135,000 houses, sheltering more than 475,000 people in some 2,000 communities worldwide.

Clayton County HFH falls under the umbrella of the Southern Crescent Habitat for Humanity organization. It's a non-profit, faith based organization whose mission is to build decent, affordable houses for the working poor. Southern Crescent is affiliated with Habitat for Humanity International but is managed and operated locally. Since its inception fifteen years ago, Southern Crescent, in partnership with churches, businesses, civic groups and individuals, have built over fifty houses in the local community.

While the annual Make A Difference Day is an excellent reason and opportunity to participate in the community, First Army personnel volunteer throughout the year. First Army personnel volunteer as mentors for our partner-in-education school [W. A. Fountain Elementary], as speakers at civic events and local youth organizations, animal shelters, and at other organizations throughout the local community.

Travelers May Donate Frequent-flier Miles to Troops on R&R Leave

By K.L. Vantran
American Forces Press Service

Travelers can donate frequent-flier miles to help troops on leave from Iraq reach their destinations through Operation Hero Miles.

Service members participating in the two-week "rest and recuperation" leave program are flown free to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, or Baltimore-Washington International Airport by the Defense Department, but must pay for connecting flights from and back to those ports. The Atlanta and Dallas-Fort Worth airports are scheduled to be added to the program Nov. 1, said Rhonda Paige, chief of strategic communications, G-1, Army Well-Being Division.

More than 200 soldiers arrive at BWI daily as part of the R&R program, said Lt. Col. Robert Hagen, Army spokesman.

"I think Operation Hero Miles is a fantastic program," said Hagen, who has been the on-site public affairs officer at BWI since the R&R program began Sept. 26. He said he's even donated his miles to the cause.

Launched by Maryland Congressman C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger, whose district includes the Baltimore airport, the Hero Miles Web site lists participating airlines and provides information on how to donate frequent-flier miles

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and how soldiers can receive complimentary tickets.

Delta, Southwest and Alaska Airlines/ Horizon Airlines have joined the operation.

"I am getting a phenomenal response to Operation Hero Miles," said the congressman in a press release. "So many Americans want to donate their frequent flier miles to help our men and women in uniform in Iraq so they can spend quality time with their family and friends here at home. I am confident that other airlines will want to join this effort to help our soldiers risking their lives for our country."



New Army Web site focuses on 'Way Ahead'

The "Way Ahead" Web site is online at <http://www.army.mil/thewayahead>, outlining the Army leadership's plan to increase wartime relevance and readiness and institutionalize a Joint and Expeditionary mindset.

Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

WARRIOR ETHOS
I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.

First United States Army and Homeland Defense

*By Capt. Kimeisha McCullum
First United States Army Public Affairs Office*

Recently, service members and DA civilians stood up 24- hour operations at First United States Army in support of Hurricane Isabel, and also during the 9/11 attack. They were ready, willing and able to provide the necessary personnel, equipment and units needed for the disaster. Why is First United States Army always ready to support? Well...

First United States Army plays a vital role in Homeland Defense. It covers anything from critical infrastructure protection, force protection, global war on terror, quick reaction force, rapid response force to no-notice responses. First Army's core functions are to train, mobilize and deploy Army units in the eastern United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in support of Homeland Defense and as directed, conduct Civil Support and emergency preparedness in support of national objectives.

Homeland Security, as a federal government mission, is a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States and reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur. The Department of Homeland Security is the lead agency for HLS. Homeland Defense, as a Department of Defense mission and a component under Homeland Security, is the protection of US Sovereignty, territory, domestic population and critical defense infrastructure against external threats and aggression. DOD is the lead agency for the HLD component of HLS.

"If you look at what First Army does as far as training, mobilizing and deploying Army Reserve and National Guard, our support is absolutely vital," said Don J. Reed, First Army's Chief of Military Support Division. "You have to remember the distinction, Homeland Defense is what we do to protect our sovereignty and DOD has the lead. We, the United States, absolutely depend upon the Guard and Reserve."

First Army, under the Federal Response Plan, has a DOD role to coordinate, plan and provide military support to civil authorities for manmade and natural disasters during federally declared disasters.

In fact, First Army is DOD's lead regional planning and execution agency in the eastern part of the United States. After a disaster is declared by the president,

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First Army in its DOD role will deploy a Defense Coordinating Officer, who provides command and control of DOD forces and assets supporting consequence management, and his or her staff which establishes a Defense Coordinating Element to respond to mission assignments from the lead federal agencies in the affected area in support of the disaster relief operation.

"MSCA exercises keep us prepared to respond when called upon to support any disaster operation," said Jerome Lovings, Plans and Operations Specialist for Military Support Division, First Army. "We prepare by conducting annual DCO external evaluations and training exercises. We do this by working with state



First U.S. Army's, G-3 Weapons of Mass Destruction Division plays a key role providing training support to 16 National Guard Civil Support Teams. Civil Support Teams are composed of 22 highly-trained full-time Army and Air National Guardsmen *Staff Photo.*

agencies, the National Guard, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal agencies that provide support in these exercises."

Even though DOD is not in charge of the disaster relief effort, they support by providing the type and quantities of resources not normally found in other states and federal agencies. They do this by providing unique assets in the terms of trained personnel and necessary equipment. The military assets on the ground supporting this operation could include medical support, transportation, aviation support, engineer support and much more.

All services have a major role in First Army's mission. The Navy, Marines and Air Force join First

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Army Names 13th Sergeant Major of the Army

Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee and Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter J. Schoomaker announced Nov. 18 that Command Sergeant Major Kenneth O. Preston has been selected as the 13th Sergeant Major of the Army.



Command Sergeant Major Kenneth O. Preston

Preston will succeed SMA Jack L. Tilley when he retires Jan. 15, 2004. The SMA designee has been serving as the command sergeant major for V Corps in Heidelberg, Germany, since April 2001. He is also serving as the command sergeant major for Combined Joint Task Force 7 serving in Baghdad, Iraq.

Preston will be sworn in as the newest Army senior enlisted advisor during ceremonies at the Pentagon on Jan. 15, 2004. As Sergeant Major of the Army, Preston will serve as the Army Chief of Staff's personal advisor on all enlisted-related matters, particularly in areas affecting soldier training, noncommissioned officer leader development and well being for families. The SMA travels extensively throughout the world observing Army training and operations. The SMA listens to concerns and provides feedback and recommendations to Army and Department of Defense leadership regarding improvements in quality of life. In addition, he sits on a wide variety of councils and boards that make decisions affecting enlisted soldiers and their families.

The SMA routinely is invited to testify before Congress. Preston is a native of Mount Savage, Md., and was born Feb. 18, 1957. Preston entered the Army on June 30, 1975, and has served in every enlisted leadership position from tank commander to command sergeant major. His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, one Bronze Star, four Meritorious Service Medals, six Army Commendation Medals, three Army Achievement Medals, Southwest Asia Service Ribbon, Liberation of Kuwait Ribbon (Saudi Arabia), Kosovo Medal, the NATO Medal and the Joint Meritorious Unit Award.

He and his wife Karen have three children, Valerie, Kenneth and Michael.

Homeland Defense (Con't)

Army during the disaster to form a Joint Task Force emergency response team to provide joint support to the civil authorities. Senior level military reservists from all the services serve as emergency preparedness liaison officers at unit, state and regional level. These officers are the subject matter experts on the resources available in the area which aids in providing a quicker response.

First Army's goal is to be prepared to respond as directed and support the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other Federal agencies in providing relief to civil authorities and those suffering. They work quickly and efficiently to meet the complex demands surfacing in that disaster.

"We don't do this alone," said Reed. "Everything we do is networked. What carries so much weight is these Training Support Brigade commanders doing all the reserve and guard training, ensuring the readiness of HLD and knowing who to talk to and how to make things happen."

First Army does this mission not only because this is a First Army mission, but also because all US Armed Forces commanders must be prepared to furnish support to civil authorities in civil disasters or emergencies using resources not required in the execution of their current missions. In any disaster or emergency requiring the immediate support of the U.S. Armed Forces to save lives, prevent human suffering or mitigating great property damage, commanders are authorized to take immediate action subject to guidance furnished by their individual service or agency.

The highest priority of the U.S. military is to defend the Nation from national security threats and foreign aggression. First Army continues to sustain training and readiness and is well prepared to provide assistance in a wide variety of different types of disasters and emergencies as directed.



'Project Video Connect' puts military families, deployed loved ones in touch

by Karen Lundy, FORSCOM News Service

Americans are coming up with many different ways to support deployed troops and their families who are left behind to carry on. There are programs that provide for donated calling cards, e-mail greetings, donations to military relief societies and allow citizens to reach out to military families in their area. But there is one that gives families the chance to reach out and touch their loved ones almost instantaneously anywhere in the world.

"Project Video Connect" gives families the opportunity to sit down with a loved one and share what has been happening at home in almost real time. The program, sponsored by the USO, has been in existence "here at the National Museum of Patriotism for about five months," according to Tee Nearman, marketing director for the Museum.

"We are so excited about this new program. With the recent extension of service time for our troops, it is needed more than ever," she said. Nearman went on to explain, "it works like this – a family of any service member can call the museum at 404-875-0691 Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and set up an appointment. Right now, we are accepting appointments only on either Wednesdays or Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Then they come in and are shown to a very private room where they can talk together without being interrupted. Their messages can be up to 10 minutes long.

"I am not a technician but I am told the video cam records the family, then embeds the video into an e-mail that is then sent immediately to the recipient. I know it works because a young mother with two small children told me that her husband received her message before her two daughters could even begin recording theirs. Now, that is fast," Nearman said.

"Right now, we only offer the service on Wednesdays and Saturdays because we only have four trained volunteers to run the system. But, as more people are trained, we plan to schedule additional appointments."

Asked how many families have taken advantage of the program, Nearman said that "more than 7,000 have done so across the U.S. Here, in Georgia, 10 families have used the service. But we hope more will do so. And there is no limit as to how many times a family can come in. "This is such a vital service offered by USO and the software company. It will contribute to positive morale for those who have to be away from their wives, husbands, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, mothers and fathers for long periods of time," Nearman said.

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BCST Brigades (Con't.)



Media role players visited the TOC adding another layer of stress to the exercise play. Media awareness training for all soldiers has become vital in this day and age. (photo by Capt. Vince Mitchell)

First Army conducts BCST exercises for Army Reserve and National Guard units in the eastern United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This training is conducted to prepare commanders and staff members of combat, combat support, and combat service support units to operate in any theater of operations and meet the combatant commanders' requirements. First Army conducts this vital training through its three 1st Brigades: 78th Division in Edison, N.J.; 85th Division in Fort Sheridan, Ill.; and 87th Division in Birmingham, Ala. Having the brigades spread throughout First Army's area of responsibility in such a manner makes it easier to manage the training of more than 350,000 soldiers, 44 major commands and 2,700 units and detachments.

Maj. Keith Yoder, a Field Artillery Observer Controller/Trainer (OC/T) from 1st Brigade, 85th Division, recently helped train members of the 34th Aviation Brigade, an Army National Guard unit from St. Paul, Minn. Yoder explains, "BCST is the Reserve Component equivalent of the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) in the Active Component." Yoder, an active component soldier, summed it up by saying, "

This is premier training and what First Army does to prepare these units through these brigades is critical."

Holland feels so strongly about how important BCST is that he tells his NCO OC/Ts, "I want you to take what you learn here and go back to a battalion or brigade headquarters and become an operations NCO or logistics Master Sergeant ... use what you learn here to benefit the [entire] Army." Doctrinally sound staff training, understanding MDMP and refining TOC operations, and dedicated soldiers and civilians are the components of a BCST Brigade and the training they provide.

VA Launches 'Kids Page' Web Site

American Forces Press Service

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of *VA Kids*, a new Web page designed to help young people understand what it means to be a veteran.

"The ideals of military service and patriotism can be unfamiliar to some children and young adults," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "The *VA Kids* Web page supports President Bush's initiatives on education and volunteerism by providing an entertaining and informative way for young people to learn why veterans are special."

The Web page, at <http://www.va.gov/kids>, contains areas for students in kindergarten through grade 5, for grades 6 through 12 and for teachers. *VA Kids* also has information about VA, Veterans Day, scholarships, student volunteer opportunities, rehabilitative and special events for disabled veterans and links to veteran-related sites.

For younger students, *VA Kids* has interactive activities such as puzzles, coloring pages, matching contests and age-appropriate language to describe a number of patriotic topics. For older students, there

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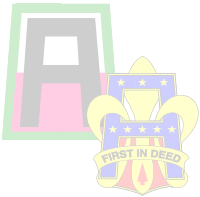
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is information on volunteer programs, scholarships and more sophisticated educational resources, games and reference links. The teachers' section contains additional information, links and suggested classroom activities.

"The title 'veteran' is bestowed by a grateful nation on citizens willing to sacrifice everything to preserve our freedom," said Principi. "It is our responsibility to honor these heroes by ensuring that each American generation understands what this prestigious title means."



VA KIDS, Teachers' Page



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Send us your stories or story ideas.

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